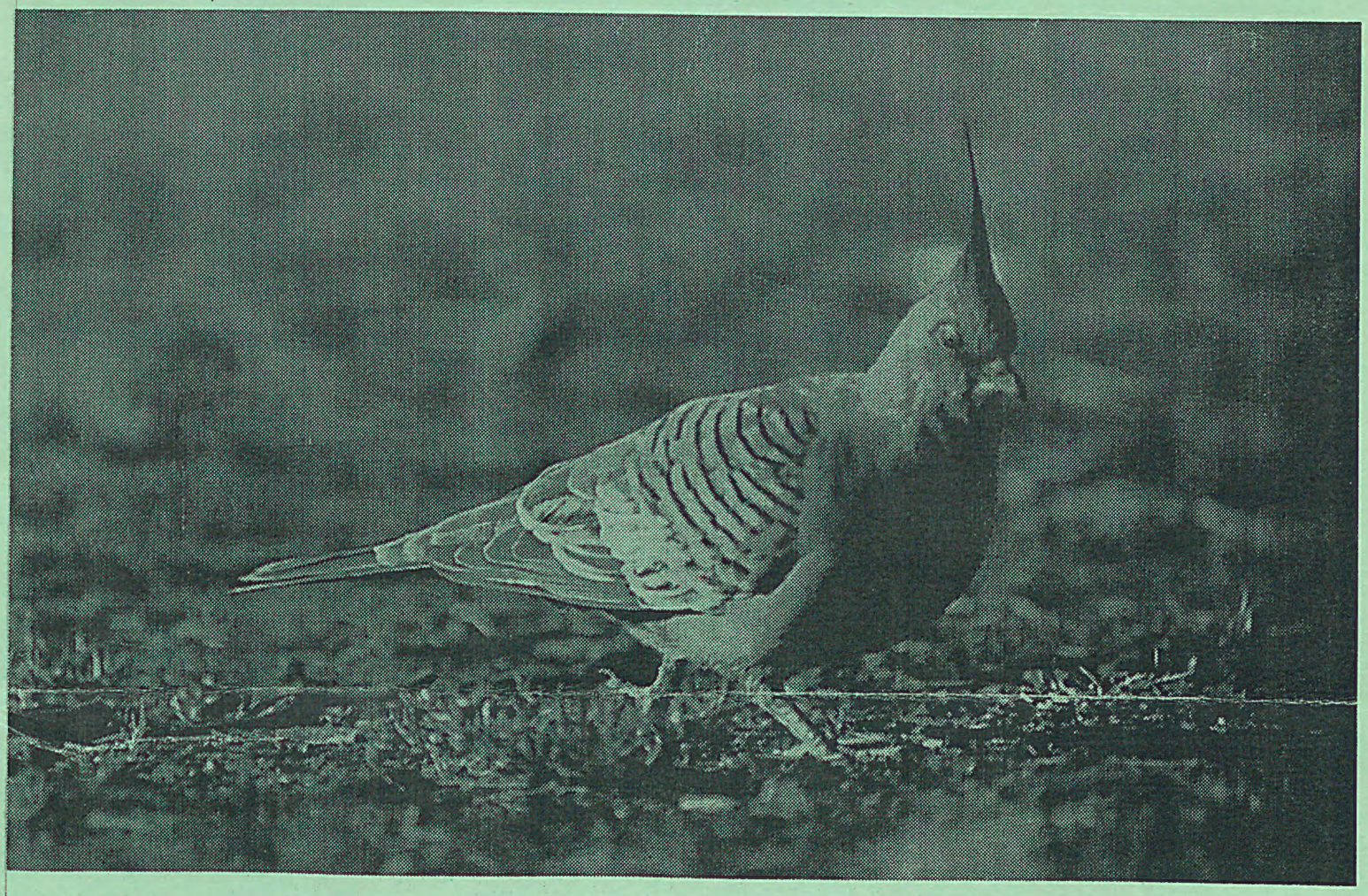
WHIRRAKEE

April 2000 Vol. 21 No. 3

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552

Office Bearers for 1999 - 2000

President	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Barbara Chmielewska	Melaleuca Ave, Longlea	5439 3075
Junior Vice President	Matthew Comer		
Secretary	Anne Bridley	39 Cootamundra Place, Junortoun	5449 3479
Minute Secretary	not filled yet		
Treasurer	Glenise Moors	Mandurang South Rd. Sedgwick	5439 6254
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	done by the committee		
Syllabus organiser	Bill Holsworth	13 Nabilla Crs, Bendigo	5443 4063
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Whirrakee contacts	Tom Burton	Tannery Lane, Mandurang	5439 3028
	Sabine Wilkens	82 Somerville Street, Bendigo	5443 2797
		e-mail: s.wilkens@bendigo.latrobe.edu.au	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $30; Family $35; Concession: Single $25; Family $30. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $30.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. Meetings start at 7:30pm and conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members: J. Cleary, D Collier; W N Holsworth; M Lewis; K Lottkowitz; R Moors; S Pelczinski; M Stone.

Excursions The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Full-day excursions normally commence at 10am (usually on a Sunday); half-day excursions normally commence at 2pm and may be either on a Saturday or Sunday. Full-day or half-day excursions are usually held on the weekend following the General Meeting. Campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has 2 active sub-groups:

Bird Observers Group: meets on the first Friday of the month, at 7:30pm. The venue for meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

President: Anne Bridley
Secretary: Jane Cleary

Mammal Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Guley, 39 Cootamundra Place, Junortoun (5449 3479)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Vice Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)

Front Cover: Photographer: Ian Flecknoe-Brown

According to Simpson and Day 1993), the Crested Pigeon, *Geophaps lophotes*, is the only pigeon that has markedly benefitted from European settlement. It has been able to extend its range as grain-growing was established and watering places for stock increased. It may now be considered an urban resident in many country towns. Crested Pigeons are present in Bendigo just about all year and you may be wondering why urban populations do not seem to increase....continued on page 3

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 21, No. 3, April 2000

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
The Dog and Cat Equation	Tom Patullo	3
February General Meeting – "Rabbits" Speaker: Brian Coman	Sabine Wilkens	4
Bird-Atlassing Outings in the Bendigo Area: April – December 2000	Bird Observers Group	5
Threatened Bird Network Volunteer activities	Anne Bridley	5
Friends of Spring Gully/Spring Creek		5
Advance Notice– Woodlands Protection and Firewood Conference		6
Campaspe Implementation Committee	Paul Dettman	6
From the Mailbag	Elaine Mathison	7
Castlemaine FNC report to VFNCA	Ern Perkins	8
David Suzuki in Bendigo	Sabine Wilkens	9
Ladybirds in the Daylesford Botanical Gardens	Sabine Wilkens	10
Taxonomic Notes on the White-tailed Spider		10
Objection to aspects of the Marong Inland Port proposal	Rod Orr	11
Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings	Bill Holsworth	14

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

....continued from front cover

Apparently the fledgling Crested Pigeons are fed for a few days on its 'baby' food, a milky mush pumped into its crop, given brief instructions on what seeds and other solids to eat, and then ruthlessly driven from parental company to join other outcasts in wandering flocks. This expulsion is performed by the male, for at this stage the female is usually sitting on another clutch of two eggs. This behaviour forces the surplus population of this essentially sedentary species to prospect for new territory (Macdonald 1980).

The males, particularly during nest-building time, perform a characteristic steep upward display flight descending in a curving glide.

References:
Macdonald, J.D. (1980). Australian Birds. Reed.
Simpson, K. and Day, N. (1993). Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Viking O'Neil.

The Dog and Cat Equation

Author: Tom Patullo

The age war as it is fought out in our back yard. We have an ageing Fox Terrier called Joe. As the doggie equivalent of rheumatism and arthritis take hold, this once extremely active and vigorous animal is now slow in his movements and lethargic in his activities. Once he had no peer at ball chasing, catching and returning, whether it be on land or water or in thick scrub. A thrown ball would always be returned to the thrower but, with an eager look and energetic tail wag which said as plain as if it spoken, "Please throw it again".

It comes to mind that when a couple of ageing members of our club came visiting at our place it was not long before Joe would meet them at the gate, for they quite often would bring him a new play ball and they would often spend some time with him.

Joe's early life was spent in a native garden at Maiden Gully and from his earliest days he was taught to chase cats, and he carried his early teaching to our new residence at Kangaroo Flat, where he had a long backyard.

The cats of the neighbourhood soon learned that our backyard, which up to that date had been free territory for them was so no longer after many close shaves with a keen fox terrier.

Many times I would hear a scuffle and look up just in time to see a cat just making it to safety over our back fence.

Thus the neighbourhood cats soon learned to keep clear of our yard. We would often see them going round our place rather than cross our yard.

And so the years went on with our back yard being taboo for cats. Joe grew older and became slower in his movements and a flock of native pigeons became regular guests in our back yard. Joe protested at first but soon the pigeons learned to accept the food I put out for them. It was quite a pleasure to sit out in the shade and watch them feed.

As time went on, the dog became slower in his old age, and the cats became cheekier. I found feathers in the yard one day. I suspected cats. My suspicion was justified when Joe put up a cat that was lurking in some long foliage where the pigeons flew into the yard. I had to stop feeding the pigeons. I could not lure them in to be killed by the neighbours' cats.

Thus we have the dog-cat equation. My dog is shut up in our yard, not being a bother to the neighbours, while the neighbours' cats, now that the threat from the ageing dog is not there, are free to roam at will, fences being no bar to cats, to prey on our native birds.....and an old man who happens to be a bird lover is deprived of a simple pleasure in his old age of feeding the native birds that accept his hospitality and visit his yard.

March General Meeting
Speaker: Brian Coman – Rabbits
Author: Sabine Wilkens

Rabbits—what else would Brian Coman talk about?.....Not so: we found out that he is presently enrolled in the Department of Humanity at La Trobe University and pursuing research into the question whether humans are part of nature. Maybe he will talk to us about that another day, but on the night – rabbits it was.

Brian dedicated the talk to Jack Kellam whom he met through the Club more than 30 years ago.

He started giving some good aspects of the rabbit. Although rabbits have caused untold environmental damage in Australia, raptorial birds like wedge-tailed eagles and brown goshawks have come to depend on them, and their numbers are known to fluctuate along with the rabbits'. It is very difficult to know what the 'normal population' densities of these raptorial birds were before rabbits were introduced, but when rabbit numbers have been high, up to nine goshawks' nests have been counted in paddocks in Sedgwick.
In addition, there is the rabbit industry which employs thousands of people, and many people owe their lives to the rabbit as it was one of the few things to eat during the depression, and was available to the majority of the population.

England is often blamed for giving us the rabbit but rabbits had not been in England for more than a few hundred years before they were exported to Australia. Rabbits originated in Spain, which explains why they are doing so well in Australia, which has a similar climate over much of its area, and to some extent similar soils as well.
One of the reasons why they were introduced is because ferreting rabbits was a popular sport amongst the ladies then. Thomas Austin who successfully introduced the first true wild rabbits in 1859 wanted to hunt them. He trapped more than 200 native cats on his property near Geelong in order to protect his flourishing colony.
Rabbits had been introduced to Australia prior to Thomas Austin—in fact they were on the first fleet—and there was a successful colony at Mt Alexander, but these were domesticated rabbits and they were all killed.
By 1870, barely 10 years after being introduced rabbits were present in large numbers all over the Western District of Victoria.
By 1880 the first rabbit canning factories appeared and by 1920 rabbits had colonised more than two-thirds of the continent. They are still largely absent from the far north.

This was the most extraordinary colonisation rate of any mammal in the world. With it came a tide of destruction, particularly in the arid zone. Rabbits eat everything in their path, eat and eat until the food runs out, and then they die in the millions. Already last century, 100 pounds were offered by the Professor of Adelaide University for a naturally regenerating seedling of mulga—one of the worst affected inland shrubs. Overall, it is hard to distinguish the damage done by rabbits from the damage caused by overstocking in conjunction with drought. Besides, drought and fluctuating prey-predator numbers have probably always been a feature of inland Australia.

In the higher rainfall country, damage due to rabbits is more insidious. It has been shown that in some areas, densities as low as 3 rabbits per ha can completely prevent regeneration of sensitive plant species.

Of the native mammals, the bilby was probably most affected. This is because it feeds and lives in much the same way as the rabbit. In fact, the reason it can survive in Australia's interior, is because it modifies its environment by making a burrow. Without the burrow, rabbits could not live in arid Australia, nor around Bendigo for that matter. "The rabbit makes the burrow but the burrow makes the rabbit", states this very well.
Burrow ripping is one of the main lines of defence when dealing with rabbits. Brian illustrated this with an anecdote from Sedgwick where the effectiveness of explosives were vividly demonstrated in warren destruction.

When the rabbit calicivirus disease was introduced it was not successful at first. However since its escape from the South Australian experimental station it has achieved high kill rates in arid Australia but has also made a big impact locally. However, the long term prospect of calicivirus controlling rabbits is not good. There is very good potential for genetic resistance to the virus.
"Behold the conies of the hills" the Bible says, indicating that here is a weak, gentle animal which makes a living amongst the rocks in the

face of hardship.
You have got to admire them.....

It emerged during question time that rabbits are back in full force at present in the Bendigo area. Some kills are presently achieved by myxomatosis and some by calicivirus disease. The question is whether the break in pressure from rabbits has allowed enough seedlings, particularly those of the endangered inland plants to reach a stage where they are not any more vulnerable to rabbits. We won't know for some time yet.
Brian Coman was in fine spirits on the night.
I felt privileged to have heard this talk.

Bird-Atlassing Outings in the Bendigo Area: March – December 2000

Outings are on the first Sunday of each month. Most outings will be half day, but bringing some morning tea/lunch would be advisable. Meet at the Senior Citizens Centre, Old High Street Golden Square at 9am, unless otherwise advised.
Please contact Anne Bridley (ph. 54 494379) or Bev Culvenor (ph. 54 421983) if attending.

April 2–	Elvyne Hogan's property at Shelbourne.
May 7–	Crosbie State Forest.
June 4–	Myers Creek between Sebastian and Raywood.
July 2–	Huntley area - Wellsford State Forest.
August 6–	Sedgwick State Forest/Swift Parrot Survey.
September 3–	Bullock Creek/East Loddon Area
October 1–	Loddon River/Serpentine Area.
November (date to be confirmed)–	Tang Tang Wildlife Reserve.
December 3–	Marong State Forest.

Threatened Bird Network, Volunteer Activities
Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Searches.

Weekends of May 27/28 and August 5/6
Contact: Simon Kennedy, phone 5430 4357.

Grey-crowned Babbler Tree Planting at Violet Town and Euroa in July - August
Contact: Birds Australia, phone 98822622

For other activities with threatened birds contact Birds Australia or consult the Club's copy of *Volunteer*, newsletter of the threatened bird network.

Friends of Spring Gully/Spring Creek

During the March general meeting Craig Jennion from the Catchment Management Authority spoke about his recent attempts to establish a "Friends of...." group in the Spring Gully/ Spring Creek area and to encourage members to contribute their research experience or any other interesting information to the next few meetings planned by the fledgling group.

Although Craig has left this job now, members interested in such a group or interested in contributing can contact Greg Peters, the waterways manager of the CMA on 5440 1809.

A Burning Issue: Woodland Protection and Firewood
A two-day conference at LaTrobe University, Bendigo, June 8 and 9.

Advance Notice! The Woodlands Department of the Victorian National Parks Association is keen to bring to your attention a conference which they are organising (with an increasing number of local organisations) on the burning issue of:

WOODLAND PROTECTION AND FIREWOOD.
KEEPING BOTH.

National Conference
La Trobe University, Bendigo, June 8 and 9

This conference is for environmentalists and community organisations,professional and hobby farmers, agroforestry experts, the industrial firewood and home heating industries, governments, catchment management authorities and environment professionals....and YOU!

You would not be surprised to learn that up to 1.5 million tonnes of firewood is consumed each year, and most of this comes from our endangered woodlands: the quintessential Australian forest and the honeypot for our wintering birds. Our woodlands can't survive this treatment; we've already lost 85% of the Box Ironbark.

There is a solution. It's already underway, but needs to happen much faster: grow the firewood on already cleared farmland. It gives the farmer a cash crop, reduces salinity and soil loss, and can provide healthy habitat if done well.

The conference will foster discussion around these problems, and the solutions, including the VNPA's Firewood Business Plan and practical examples of plantation firewood from NSW, Victoria, and the ACT. An afternoon field trip and conference dinner are included.

Further information will be available in March. If you can volunteer some time, have some ideas, suggest some places to advertise or just want to register interest contact Karen Alexander (tel/fax 03 59684651 or Jason Doyle (VNPA, tel 03 96508296, fax 96546843). There will be a cost but good concessions will be available for voluntary community organisations.

Campaspe Implementation Committee
Author: Paul Dettman

The Campaspe Implementation Committee is under the umbrella of the North Central Catchment Management Authority
This letter was written to the Club by Paul Dettman

I am writing to introduce myself as a representative of the Catchment Management Authority (CMA) Campaspe Implementation Committee. As you are probably aware the CMA works with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Landcare and other community groups and landholders in working to solve the degradation problems throughout the catchment.

The Campaspe Implementation Committee is made up of 11 locals from throughout the catchment with skills in many different areas. We recognise that community groups are one of the most vital players in tackling degradation problems. We are all involved in local Landcare groups to some extent.

The Campaspe Implementation Committee has a particular interest in Landcare and community groups and are keen to improve the partnership between the community and the Implementation Committee. We can be a point of contact for your group in passing issues onto the CMA. You can fax or write to me, or your local Committee member.
My address is Watchbox Rd Kyneton 3444, fax 54234223.

Finally we want to thank and encourage you for the work you are doing in your local area, it can sometimes be thankless, but will provide long term benefit for years to come.

From the Mailbag
Author: Elaine Mathison

Each month the club receives a number of newsletters and magazines: some by subscription and some in exchange for Whirrakee. These are available from the club library.

* * * * * * *

NATURE Australia(Aust.Museum)
Autumn 2000

"Origin of Life" by Jeremy Bailey reports that a property thought to be only associated with life has been found to be present in a mereorite that is older than life on Earth.

"Adventures at Possum Rock" by Myfanwy Runcie describes a study of the Rock Ringtail. This secretive rock-dwelling possum is endemic to rock outcrops of northern Australia, from the Kimberley to Lawn Hill in Queensland.

"Let Them Eat Grass!" by Peter Whitehead and Terry Dawson relates the life history of the Magpie Goose, dependent on various plants which grow on the seasonal flood-plains of tropical Australia. The introduction of exotic grasses to these areas may bring future problems.

* * * * * * *

THE VICTORIAN NATURALIST(FNCV)
Volume 117(1) February 2000

"The Bottlenose Dolphin...." outlines the behaviour of this species in the southern end of Port Phillip Bay. Three categories of dolphin behaviour, travelling, feeding and social, were identified.

"Shell Studies on the Bellarine Peninsula" reports on a study devised to show what information can be gained from a collection of shells and what it can tell us about the environment.

"Companions for the Lone Pine ..." tells of the discovery of a new population of the White Cypress Pine at Maribyrnong in the heart of Melbourne.

HABITAT(ACF)
February 2000

"Queensland's New Law of the Land: Good, Bad and Ugly" by Charlie Sherwin relates that significant gains were made recently in the campaign to halt vegetation destruction.

"Whale Wars" by Margi Prideaux reports that hundreds of whales are still hunted each year and that thousands of dolphins are illegally slaughtered.

"The Fatal Shore" by John Sinclair reveals that increasing tourism is posing a serious threat to the wildlife and plants of Fraser Island, despite its world heritage status.

* * * * * * *

PARKWATCH(VNPA)
March 2000

"Project Hindmarsh - More than Just Roadside Planting" by Ron Dodds describes "a bold vision to restore vegetative links between the Little and Big Desert National Parks, while enhancing and improving the region's farm productivity".

"Tarra-Bulga National Park" by Daniel Catrice outlines the history of these small reserves of original forest in South Gippsland.

* * * * * * *

Also received recently:

*Castlemaine Naturalist(CFNC)
March 2000

*Geelong Naturalist(GFNC)
March 2000

*Newsletter (Ballarat FNC)
March 2000

*Field Nats News(VFNC)
March 2000

*Volunteer(Threatened Bird Network)
January 2000

- includes Calendar of Volunteer activities for the coming year

* * * * * * *

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc report to VFNCA meeting March 2000
Author: Ern Perkins

THE PHOTOPOINT PROJECT

Castlemaine received a grant of $ 2600 from Parks Victoria. This paid for some computer time, travel, film, photocopying, storage materials etc.

What was taken.
Bushland landscapes, creeklines, rare plant habitats, roadsides etc. from a known position, so that at some future time, a photograph could be taken from the same spot. Bushland views were often taken at track intersections or on roadside crests. Close-ups of plants were not included.

The aim.
To document the bushland and landscape of the Mt Alexander Shire, as a reference.

Number of photographs.
so far, 743 photographs have been processed.

Computer database.
For each photograph, data such as serial number, date and time, focal length, name of district, location, latitude and longitude, direction of view, major plant species present, photographer and copyright holder, location of primary image and miscellaneous notes were entered into a computer data base (Corel Paradox was used).

Data sheets.
For each image, two copies of the data sheets were printed. These included information on the data base, a copy of the image and an acknowledgement of Parks Victoria's role. The sheets were placed back to back in polypropylene sleeves.

Long term storage.
One set of data sheets will be stored in the Castlemaine Historical Society Archives. The other copy will be held by the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club. The historical society will also store the primary image where CFNC owns the image.

Source of photographs.
a. Many were taken specifically for the project. Colour print film was used. Two copies of each print was produced during D&P.

b. Other sources were prints and slides held by CFNC members, Landcare groups, the Historical Society Collection and members of the public.

We did not advertise, as more material was available than could be processed.

CD ROM.
All prints and slides were scanned and a copy placed on a CD ROM. Prints were scanned at 3000 dpi and slides at a slightly higher effective resolution, and stored in GIF and JPEG format. There was a trade-off between resolution, image format and file size. The data base is also included on the C. There is room for about 1000 photographs at the resolution used.

Copying slides.
A dedicated slide scanner was used. B&W prints were then made using a 300 dpi laser printer. A printer with higher resolution would give better quality prints. although the print copy is in black and white, a coloured image is stored on the CD.

Photocopies of prints.
When only one copy of a print was available, the print was photocopied in B&W using a good quality computer scanner to give grey-scale prints. Colour computer prints would have been beyond the budget.

Equipment needed.
A computer with CD burner and at least 640 M of spare hard disk space.
A print scanner.
A slide scanner (if slides are to be copied). Some flat-bed scanners will scan slides but the quality is poor.
A suitable data base.
A digital camera would reduce costs of photographic materials, but would not give a permanent primary image. We have not yet included photographs from this source.
A GPS unit to give latitude and longitude. a set of 25000 survey maps is also very useful in determining latitude and longitude.

Wastage of prints.
Was very low.

The future.
It is planned to add Landcare photographs to the collection, and take a small number of additional

photographs over the next twelve months.

Problems.
The project was very time-consuming.
Because of the large file size of scanned images, it was not practical to share scanning of photographs. Nor was it feasible to share data base work. The scanning component and data base component could be separated.

Cost per image.
[Excluding labour, travel costs].

D&P colour photographs	0.75 (inc film costs)
Plastic sleeves	0.05
Data sheet x 2	0.30 (at 15c/sheet)
Storage material	0.05
Miscellaneous (glue etc)	0.05
	1.20

This is a minimum figure. Some other costs e.g. CD costs are independent of the quantity of photographs. The figures do not include wear and tear or depreciation on computer equipment, wastage, negative storage costs etc. Use of discount photofinishers could reduce photograph costs.

David Suzuki in Bendigo
Author Sabine Wilkens

What an event!
700 people came to listen to David Suzuki and they were to have an all 'organic' dinner including juice, wine and chocolate. We even discovered organic water on our tables. The power at the venue (The All Seasons) was 'green', the menu was printed on recycled paper and the entrance tickets had seeds of local plants embedded in them.
Joy Finch, the publisher of *Green Connections*, a Castlemaine based magazine, had invited David Suzuki and had organised the dinner.
Diligently, I took notes at the dinner but have since lost them in a safe place somewhere, so the following is from memory only.

It was not a doomsday speech, Dr Suzuki put the environmental issue in the broader context of world politics and poverty. An article in the Age (*Features* , page 13, Monday 6 March) states that Suzuki thinks we are past it, past the critical period where the loss of biodiversity may have been reversed. However, what is left is still worth fighting for and that we must do.

He said we are the earth, the water, the air and the fire and yet we do everything to destroy the very essence of our lives. Why?
The earth supplies us with food, yet we pollute and exploit it. We share the air with all living things and cannot exist without it. We heard how many molecules of air we inhale with every breath might have been breathed by Joan of Arc, Mahatma Gandhi or a dinosaur...yet we pollute it. The water is within us (in fact most of us is water) and gets recycled through all living beings and all bodies of water on earth, yet we pollute it and exploit it. Why?

I thought of this message when Brian Coman last month mentioned his new research topic, "Are humans part of nature?"
Someone should have asked him that question but they may have got referred to David Suzuki's latest book *Naked Ape to Superspecies* for an answer. As it was, there was only a little time for questioning and Anne Bridley got one out of the total of three questions allowed. What does he think of putting a price on wildlife?
The answer given was uncomfortably vague...but with all these issues there is no clear-cut answer. If there was we would all get suspicious. He did, however, point out that the cost of purifying water in British Columbia, a job performed for nothing by native forest, would cost an immense amount of money.

Ladybirds in the Daylesford Botanical Gardens

Author: Sabine Wilkens

Last year, John Hawker spoke to the Club about the Botanical Gardens of Victoria (see September *Whirrakee*). That was the first time I had heard of the Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens in Daylesford.

Last weekend we visited the gardens and I was impressed by the density and size of the trees. Parts of it feel like semi-tropical forest, the trees are very close, the day was also humid, the vegetation very lush and there are some wonderful ferny glades. The soil which is volcanic in origin must be very suitable for the plants there. The most impressive trees are conifers and one, an enormous Spanish Fir, *Abies pinsapo*, is on the National Trust register of significant trees.

The site was reserved in 1863 but a lot of existing trees were used in the design by William Sangster who later on designed the Exhibition Gardens in Melbourne.

There is a look-out tower on the top of the hill and this gives a wonderful view over the canopy. In the corners and crevices of the look-out tower, outside just under the roof and inside on the walls of the narrow staircase were thousands of ladybirds, clumped in patches of tens to several hundreds.

What were those beetles doing there?

Does anybody know if there are still wombats living there (they gave the site their original name)?

Taxonomic Notes on the White Tailed Spider

Author: Jenny Shield

The idea for this article came from a jar with two spiders collected by Glenys Moors. One was a male jumping spider, a species of *Holoplatys*, which was flat and black except for two pairs of horizontal white markings on the abdomen and a white patch at the tip. The other was a dead and unrecognisable white tailed spider. According to Glenys, the jumping spider was responsible for the death of the white tailed spider.

The white tailed spiders belongs to the genus *Lampona* which has been recently revised by Norm Platnick of the American Museum of Natural History. *Lampona* now consists of 66 species, and is restricted to Australasia.

Norm Platnick says that the most commonly encountered lamponids are large, syanthropic and occasionally medically important spiders that have generally been identified as *Lampona cylindrata* but actually constitute a group of three closely related species: *L. cylindrata*, *L. murina* and *L. papua*. Of these three species, only *L. cylindrata* has been found in Western and South Australia and in Tasmania, and that species is also common in Victoria and New South Wales, extends north into south-central Queensland and has apparently been introduced into the South Island of New Zealand. Only *L. murina* has been found in eastern Queensland, and that species also occurs south to Victoria and has apparently been introduced into Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island, the North Island of new Zealand, and the Kermadec Islands. *L. papua* is known only from New Guinea.

Platnick gives only 3 records of *L. murina* in Victoria, and these were all near the coast, so it is not yet clear whether *L. murina* occurs in Central Victoria.

It is also not clear whether white tailed spiders which have caused necrotic ulcers are *L. cylindrata* or *L. murina*..

To make matters worse, I have been confusing another species *L. ruida* with *L cylindrata*.. In fact, Glenys' white tailed spider may well be *L. ruida*, but I cannot be sure.

Six species of *Lampona* are represented in the Central Victoria collection including *Lampona cohuna* . In addition, six species belonging to other genera of the family Lamponididae are represented in the collection.

Reference: Platnick, N.I. A relimitation and revision of the Australasian ground spider family Lamponidae (Araneae:Gnaphosoidea). Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History No. 245, 2000.

Objection to Aspects of the Marong Inland Port Proposal.
Author: Rod Orr

Below is a submission submitted by the Club with regards to the Marong Port proposal in December. We have not yet been informed of a date for any further hearing on this matter or even whether there will be such a hearing - It also seems that everyone else who has expressed an interest is also waiting for more information.

P.S. Just before going to print the Advertiser published that the proposal has been shelved.....

Mr Andrew Paul,
Chief Executive Officer,
City of Greater Bendigo
PO Box 733
Bendigo 3552

The members of the Bendigo Field Naturalist's Club Inc. wish to object to the environmental consequences of developing a container handling and storage facility at the site proposed in Marong specifically because of the loss of large, old eucalypts (mostly Grey Box but some Yellow Box) along Landry Lane, if the proposed Marong Inland Port is permitted to be developed at this site.

Age of trees in Landry Lane

Although the proposed site is cleared land currently zoned Residential 1, off-site activities associated with this proposal will result in the destruction of a large number of old eucalypts mainly along Landry Lane. The age of these trees had been estimated by some objectors (in Letters to the Editor, Bendigo Advertiser) as 80 - 100 years old.

During a visit to this site (14 December 1999), we measured the circumference of several of the larger trees on Landry Lane and calculated their Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), a standard technique used in estimating relative size and age of trees. Based on these measurements we estimated the ages of these larger trees to be greatly in excess of the currently claimed ages.

Some of the larger individuals which we chose to measure because they had obviously grown as the dominant stem after coppicing (that is, as regrowth from the stump which was left alive following harvesting of the original tree for timber) are significantly older than 100 years and have probably been growing since when Marong was first established.

We also selected and measured other individual trees which were not growing from old stumps and showed no signs of having been pollarded to make them coppice. These were much older specimens, the largest Grey Box and Yellow Box having ages, estimated from their measured DBH, in excess of 250 years. Such large, old trees are irreplaceable and any claim that equivalent revegetation works can be carried out to replace the trees removed is seriously deficient by failing to recognise this.

Large, old trees have very extensive and very deep root systems and dry out the soil profile to a great depth - their beneficial effects are usually grossly underestimated. In this region, such large, old trees would exercise significant control over ground-water depth and so would protect Landry Lane and large areas of the adjoining cleared land from salinisation.

Not even their much more obvious landscape features could be replaced by revegetation unless Grey Box and Yellow Box were planted there and we all waited 250 years or longer until they grew back to their present size - what a ridiculous idea!

Why bother with this pretence? Why not leave these significant old growth remnant trees as they are and spend the revegetation time and effort somewhere else nearby to add to the present environmental and landscape benefits of the trees along Landry Lane?

Other options which preserve these trees along Landry Lane should be pursued. The proposal in its present state of development admits that additional adjoining land will need to be acquired to widen access from the St Arnaud Road to the development site. We suggest that access to the site should be redesigned entirely so that Landry Lane is not used at all but that

access is gained instead by acquiring already cleared land for use as roadways to the site and as parking space for container trucks. This would also result in the protection of those trees marked for removal from the St Arnaud Road-Landry Lane intersection.

If it is too difficult to deal with the owners of already cleared farm land at and near this site, then another nearby site should be chosen for the proposed container handling and storage facility. A more suitable site could be chosen so that cleared land is used for the development as well as for all access requirements so avoiding any loss of large, old trees.

Habitat value of the trees in Landry Lane

The proposal refers only briefly to the habitat value of the large, old trees along Landry Lane, concentrating mainly on whether rare or endangered fauna would be likely to use these trees. This approach is seriously deficient. Many other species of native fauna also depend on small areas of remnant natural vegetation such as Landry Lane and observations of their use of such an area gives a much more valid measure of its habitat value.

The loss of such an area of remnant natural vegetation causes displacement and local extinction of many species and gradually leads to the situation where species which were once common in the region have become increasingly rare because of the total, overall impact of local instances of habitat destruction.

Trees which have been allowed to survive to this size and age are uncommon but when they are found it is almost always along quiet, undeveloped lanes like Landry Lane. Most of our remaining natural vegetation remnants across the rural areas of this region and virtually all of our region's old-growth eucalypts occur along lanes and roads giving a very false impression of the overall amount of tree cover in the landscape. As well as being taken for granted because it is so often seen as common roadside vegetation, this also means that the last remaining remnants of natural vegetation in many rural areas are also continually threatened by all of the activities which take place along road reserves, including the indirect, off-site consequences of a development proposal such as the Marong container facility.

During our brief visit to the site, we made incidental observations of the presence of the following species of native bird fauna: Eastern Rosella; Magpie; Galah; Noisy Miner; Red-rumped Parrot; Striated Pardalote; Cockatiel (several individuals of each species were seen or heard at the site during our visit).

We were not able to observe whether representatives of other families of native fauna were present in the remnant vegetation along Landry Lane because we visited during the day and, except for (most) birds, most other native fauna species are nocturnal. Many of the larger trees were old enough to have produced habitat hollows however, so it is reasonable to expect that native marsupials would frequent these old trees. It would be well worthwhile for a more detailed Fauna survey to be conducted by the Flora & Fauna staff of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to gain a better impression of the habitat value of the remnant vegetation along Landry Lane.

Conclusion

In conclusion, other aspects of the proposal to establish a container handling transport business at Marong may have some merit but unless other options for access and parking of container trucks are developed which do not involve the removal of any of the remnant vegetation along Landry Lane then this proposal in its present form should not be allowed to proceed at this site.

Any private economic and development benefits gained by the individuals promoting this scheme would have been gained at the expense of environmental costs to the wider community such as the loss of the unusually large, old remnant eucalypts along Landry Lane and the longer term consequences flowing from this.

We make this objection and offer these suggestions hoping that Council will insist that this development proposal is modified so that these old, large trees along Landry Lane are protected from disturbance or needless destruction.

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings – Second Wednesday 7:30 pm

Date – 2000	Topic	Speaker
12 April	**Aboriginal Plant Use and Land Management**	**Beth Gott** Dept of Biological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, Vic 3168
10 May	**Environmental Law**	**Barry Phillips** School of Management, Technology and Environment, LaTrobe University, Bendigo, P.O. Box 199, Bendigo 3552
2 June	**Special Speaker for World Environment Day**	To be announced
14 June	**Mushrooms and Fungi**	**Robert Seviour** Dept of Biological Sciences LaTrobe University, Bendigo, P.O. Box 199, Bendigo, 3552
12 July	**Hollow Formation in Box-Ironbark forests**	**Les Vearing** Forester in Charge, Bendigo Forest Management Area, Dept of Natural Resources and Environment, Box 3100, Bendigo Mail Centre 3554
9 August	**Fallen Timber and Fauna Habitat**	**Lawrie Conole** 3 Gezireh Street, Pascoe Vale South Victoria 3044
13 September	**President's Address at Annual General Meeting**	**Rodney Orr**
11 October	**Soils of Bendigo**	**Nathalie Baxter** Land Evaluation Officer Centre foe Land Protection P.O. Box 3100, Bendigo Mail Centre. 3554
8 November		To be announced
13 December	**Christmas Dinner**	No speaker this month

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Mammal Survey Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 7:30pm
Dr Beth Gott, Dept of Biological Sciences, Monash University, will talk about Aboriginal Plant Use and Land Management.

Wednesday, May 10, 7:30
Barry Phillips (School of Management, Technology and Environment will be talking about 'Environmental Law'.

Bird Observers Group

April 2–	Elvyne Hogan's property at Shelbourne.
May 7–	Crosbie State Forest.
June 4–	Myers Creek between Sebastian and Raywood.

Atlassing Excursions are conducted on the first Sunday of every month. See page 5 for the year's program.
Meet 9am at the Clubroom, this is a half-day excursion.
Please contact Anne Bridley (ph. 54 493479) or Bev Culvenor (ph. 54 421983) if attending.

Garden News

There will be a Working Bee for stage 4 of the garden on Sunday, 21 May, 2000 starting at 9am.

The ground needs to be prepared and mulched for stage 4. Come and help if you can....these working bees always turn into pleasant events.

Supper

The usual arrangements for supper are as follows: members either bring a plate or pay $1 for supper. This small amount is used to reimburse members who purchase essential supper supplies.

Other Events

Woodland Protection and Firewood. Keeping Both
June 8 and 9, La Trobe University, Bendigo
see page 6 for details.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433